

Kate Bifield testimonial for the Rural Women's Movement

I came to Africa as a complete blank slate. I knew nothing of South Africa's history, culture or troubles. What I did recognize was it was a great opportunity to learn and offer a helping hand. Despite the few short weeks I spent with the Rural Women's Movement (RWM) in Durban, I feel I achieved everything I had hoped for and more. I had the great fortune of Working under Sizani Ngubane, the director and founder of RWM. She is easily one of the most inspirational people I have met. Her knowledge, enthusiasm and energy made the placement worth it alone.

I spent the first week working in the office writing funding proposals and getting to grips with what the organization does. The real treat came in week two when we travelled to the rural town of KwaLister where we were welcomed with open arms and offered the most generous amount of hospitality by one of the local families. We were there for 3 days on one of RWM's current projects. The initiative is to build a communal vegetable garden for the group of 50 women involved in the project. It was at the very early stages so our role was to facilitate a meeting with the women. It was so interesting to be apart of the process, listening to the women speak Zulu and to work on coming up with agreements so the project could commence. Had I had longer to spare I would had loved to been lucky enough to see the project from start to finish.

This was such a useful and eye-opening experience that has motivated me to do more along these lines. I got everything I had hoped for out of this opportunity and more. I have learned so much in such a short time. I have met new friends and role models, seen places I would never otherwise have had the opportunity to see and been submerged in the 'real' South African culture. I particularly liked the fact this placement is not effected by the travel industry and any money that changes hands goes directly into the pocket of the organization. If you are interested in women's empowerment, land rights issues, HIV, agriculture or helping people in general, I can honestly recommend volunteering with the Rural Women's Movement.